

Opposite Sides of the Fence

by

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FADE IN ON:

EXT. CLOSE-UP ON LAUGHLIN FAMILY - AFTERNOON

A Rockwellian pastiche, frozen in time.

RHYTHMIC CHANTS pierce the air. Someone's throwing one hell of a party nearby.

KERI LAUGHLIN (16) stands glued to Mother SARAH'S (30s) side. Clearly, the same "sculptor" forged both faces. The family resemblance? Truly striking.

Though Sarah's shows more years of wear. Not that Keri looks much better. Worry's a trait both of them share.

Keri reaches for Sarah's hand. Trembling fingers entwine.

KERI
(whispers)
Mom? I'm scared. Let's get out of here.

DAN LAUGHLIN'S (30s) voice rains down on their heads.

DAN
Go home? Of course, Honey.

KERI
No. I wanna go. Inside.

Sarah steals a glance at her husband's face. Dan leans against a limo. His floppy hair turned steel gray from stress. Pounds fill out his once-angular frame.

SARAH
Our daughter already told us what she wants. No need to make her more confused.

DAN
Confused? She's sixteen. You're letting her make the final choice?

KERI
I want you guys - to come with me!

The CHANTING grows in volume. The party's getting real rowdy. Keri shoots nervous eyes towards the sound.

SIGNS bounce up and down like bouncy-balls in a mosh pit. Or plastic coke bottles in a storm-tossed sea.

A THRONG OF PROTESTORS line both sides of a garden path. Leading to...

EXT. PLANNED PARENTHOOD

A nondescript, squat building. Clearly labeled signs hang over the door.

On the *protestors'* signs - a multitude of conflicting messages. It's obvious what their yelling against.

And for.

PRO-CHOICE INSERT: "Reproduction is a Woman's Right!"

PRO-LIFE INSERT: Placards with bloody pics - dismembered embryos, aborted first trimester.

Keri looks away. Then down at her stomach. It protrudes a bit. The baby bump visible, though quite small.

Dan whispers in Keri's ear.

DAN

Your Mom and I support you. We don't have to do... this. Today.

Sarah yanks her daughter away.

SARAH

We talked this over. No guilt trips.

DAN

Remember how long it took *us* to decide? Sixty long, grueling days.

SARAH

I remember. Not to mention, nights.

DAN

But we decided to keep the baby. Aren't you glad you changed your mind? For Keri's sake?

SARAH

This is *her* body. Not yours. Or mine!

Parental glares shred the air. The tension thicker than a dissection knife.

SARAH

(hisses)

She has her whole life ahead of her. I won't let her make... our mistake.

A MIDDLE AGED LIFER yells their way.

LIFER

Don't make your baby pay for your sins!

The Lifer waves a bloody DOLL in the air. She chucks it at the limo. It ricochets off the door, to Keri's feet. Keri SHRIEKS. Hops away.

SARAH

How dare you assault my child!

DAN

You wanna start something? Deal with me!

Anger distorts the woman's features.

LIFER

If you'd been a decent father to this child, this isn't something she'd have to face.

The woman extends a hand toward Keri. Through the crowd, over the barrier.

LIFER

Honey, let's talk a few minutes. You and me. No-one wants to see you do something you'll regret.

A PRO-CHOICER shoves the Lifer back. Tempers flare nova bright. Keri crushes her face to Sarah's chest.

KERI

Mom. Go now. Please. That way.

She points towards the clinic entrance. Sarah turns unsure eyes towards a still-conflicted Dan.

SARAH

Be brave for your daughter. Come with me.

Keri shakes her head. Doesn't want her father there.

SARAH

On second thought... Stay with the car.

Sarah holds tight to Keri's hand. Leads her daughter down their "Walk of Shame."

EXT. DOWN THE CLINIC PATH

A frightened Keri slouches down, looks from right to left. Angry faces are the only thing in sight.

She takes a step. The LIFER snags her wrist.

LIFER

Feel that? Did you know babies have a sense of touch by eight weeks? How many weeks has it been - thirteen? Girls just like you die from botched abortions all the time. Once they take your money, they don't care!

She waves a gory brochure in Keri's face. "Partial birth abortions". Dismembered limbs.

Even worse nightmare visions slither through Keri's mind:

INT. - ABORTION CLINIC NIGHTMARE - "PRO-LIFE SIDE"

It looks like a mad scientist's lair. Designed by a particularly nasty Cenobite.

"Nightmare Keri" lies on a filthy gurney. Bloody legs splayed open wide.

A CRAZED NURSE slaps on day-glow gloves. A spiked tube in her hand SUCKS ragged air.

NURSE

Okay, honey. Open wide! Enough to get *this* in there!

The Nurse RAMS her fist home, with the tube. She RIPS out a bloody fetus (plastic and fake, like the doll.)

She tosses the stiff body over her shoulder. CACKLES maniacally like the Wicked Witch of the West.

NURSE

There. See? All better now!

EXT. PLANNED PARENTHOOD - REAL LIFE

Keri opens her eyes. Is yanked aside - by the Pro-Choice Woman from before. She pulls the brochure from Keri's weak hand.

PRO-CHOICER

Don't listen to her, Sweetheart. She's no doctor. She doesn't know. Those pictures show potential... but it's not a real baby. Not yet, anyway. That's just what the right-wing nuts want you to see.

The woman hugs Keri closer, whispers in her ear.

PRO-CHOICER

I had an abortion sixteen years ago. She would've been - almost your age. But it wasn't the right time. For anyone. And it's not as bad as they say.

Keri blinks. Overloaded. Confused.

And Cartoon Unicorns float through the air.

INT. - ABORTION CLINIC VISION - "PRO-CHOICE SIDE"

Happy MUZAK tinkles in the background. Music box tunes full of innocence - and good 'ole home county flair.

"Dream-Keri" perches on an ice-cream store counter stool. She's clad in a pink hospital gown - a cheery shade.

Happy-Sarah stands at her side; a delighted expression on her face.

The nurse from before hands Keri a lollipop. She's dressed head to toe in white, like a medical saint. *This* time, she doesn't look scary... at all.

NURSE

Here. Have a taste. It's Cherry!

Keri takes a tentative lick. The Nurse exploits her distraction, and pricks Keri's arm with a mini needle. Bee-sting quick.

KERI

Ow!

The Nurse giggles like a Japanese school-girl.

NURSE

Don't be silly. That couldn't hurt!

She dabs Keri's blood away with a cotton ball. Covers the spot with a rainbow colored band-aid.

KERI

Is that anesthesia? For the pain?

NURSE

No. We're all done. It's gone away.

Dream-Sarah beams down at her daughter. Tousles her hair.

SARAH

And you were so worried, Dear. Let's head back now. Tell your Dad.

Happy-Nurse whirls around. She bends over a short, squat freezer, flashing her trim behind.

She burrows through vials of frozen embryos. And retrieves... something strange. A chocolate flavored ice cream cone.

NURSE

(singing)

Who wants some? We've got sprinkles!

EXT. PLANNED PARENTHOOD - REAL LIFE

Sarah shields her daughter from both sides. She glares out at the battlefield - 'Momma Bear' anger in her eyes.

SARAH

She's my daughter. Leave her alone!

Another step. The entrance doors *almost* in reach.

Keri peers through. The nurse from her visions waits on the other side.

This version is utterly plain. A woman with jeans and sensible shoes - neither angel. Nor demon.

The tag on her shirt reads: "Mary Rachett." Nurse Rachett smiles, then pushes open the door.

NURSE

Please. Come inside.

SARAH

Ready, Dear?

KERI

No. But let's go anyway.

She glances back - past the screaming crowds. Towards the limo, and Dan. Sarah kisses Keri's forehead. SIGHS.

SARAH

Sweetie, I'm here. We'll take our time. I want whatever you want. For *your* life.

Keri takes the first step. Walks inside...

FINAL FADE OUT: